

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

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ACTION SS-30

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /031 W

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R 192134Z APR 74

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8464

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 09605

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, FR

SUBJECT: FRENCH PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS - DANGERS AND  
OPPORTUNITIES

1. AT THE OUTSET OF THE CAMPAIGN, ALL EVIDENCE INDICATES  
PRESIDENTIAL RACE WILL BE HARD FOUGHT, BITTER AND CLOSE.  
EMBASSY VIEWS ON THE SIGNIFICANCE OF A MITTERRAND, A  
CHABAN-DELMAS OR A GISCARD D'ESTAING PRESIDENCY WILL  
BE SPELLED OUT IN SUBSEQUENT MESSAGES.

2. ALL THREE PRINCIPAL CANDIDATES HAVE ALREADY UNDER-  
SCORED THEIR COMMITMENT TO AT LEAST ONE IMPORTANT ASPECT  
OF RECENT FRENCH FOREIGN POLICY, I.E., RESISTANCE TO ANY  
IMPINGEMENT ON FRANCE'S ABILITY TO PURSUE ITS NATIONAL  
GOALS IN THE INTERNATIONAL ARENA. IN THESE CIRCUM-  
STANCES, WE BELIEVE WE SHOULD BE PARTICULARLY CIRCUM-  
SPECT DURING THE CAMPAIGN IN AVOIDING ANY ACTION WHICH  
COULD BE CONSTRUED AS U.S. EFFORT TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF  
THE TEMPORARY POWER VACUUM IN FRANCE TO PURSUE U.S.  
OBJECTIVES WHICH FRANCE HAS CONSISTENTLY OPPOSED. THE  
DANGER, IF SUCH ISSUES ARE RAISED, IS THAT FRANCO-  
AMERICAN RELATIONS COULD BECOME EMBROILED IN THE CAM-  
PAIGN AND THE CANDIDATES MIGHT BE COMPELLED TO TAKE  
STANDS WHICH WOULD RESTRICT THEIR ABILITY TO ADOPT A  
MORE ACCOMMODATING POSTURE TOWARDS THE UNITED STATES  
AFTER THE ELECTION.

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3. THE ELECTIONS ALSO PRESENT AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE

UNITED STATES IN THAT GISCARD, CHABAN AND EVEN  
MITTERRAND, APPEAR AT THIS STAGE WILLING TO CHANGE THE STYLE, AND  
PERHAPS OVER TIME SOME ASPECTS OF THE SUBSTANCE, OF  
FRENCH FOREIGN POLICY. BARRING SOME SORT OF DRAMATIC  
US-FRENCH CONFRONTATION DURING THE CAMPAIGN, IT IS  
REASONABLE TO EXPECT LESS STRIDENTLY NEGATIVE GOF  
APPROACH TO FRANCO-AMERICAN RELATIONS AFTER THE  
ELECTIONS THAN MARKED THE FINAL MONTHS OF THE POMPIDOU  
REGIME. WHILE WE MUST, OF COURSE, CONTINUE NORMAL  
BUSINESS WITH FRANCE AND EUROPE, FOR EXAMPLE ON  
QUESTIONS SUCH AS ARTICLE XVIV.6, A LOW KEY U.S. AP-  
PROACH DURING THE CAMPAIGN TO DEEPER ISSUES INVOLVING  
US-EC RELATIONS, WHICH WILL OTHERWISE PROBABLY BE ON  
THE BACK-BURNER IN EUROPE UNTIL AFTER THE ELECTIONS,  
WOULD PUT US IN THE BEST POSITION FOR DEALING WITH  
THE NEW GOF.  
IRWIN

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